

Train Orders

Official Newsletter of the New Jersey Division,
Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association



October 2025

Volume 36 Number 5

New Superintendent and Regional Convention

Glyn Thomas, Superintendent

Those of you who attended the September division meet at Forked River will know that it included the Division's annual general meeting, at which we affirmed the recent Director elections of Tom Neukirchen, Mike Prokop, Thom Radice, and myself. John Gallagher has stepped down as Superintendent, so I was elected as his replacement. All the other Division officer roles remain unchanged. Thanks to

everyone who voted in the elections, and I appreciate the Board's support in assuming this critical role.

I'd like to thank John Gallagher for his service as Superintendent over the last four years. John became Superintendent in April 2021 when Bill Grosse resigned to move out of state in the midst of the most challenging period in the Division's 56 years existence. During the 2020 COVID lockdown, all in-person meetings and conventions, not to mention layout visits and operating sessions, had been cancelled. Due to the suddenness of Bill's departure, John was thrust into the Superintendent's role with minimal hand-over or knowledge sharing. At the time, we were still doing virtual meetings, but John led the effort to resume in-person meetings. When meetings did resume that Fall, they used a challenging hybrid Zoom and in-person format because some members were reluctant to join in-person due to continued mask mandates and understandable health concerns. In the ensuing 4 years, John has presided over a gradual return to 'normal' Division operations. We should all be extremely thankful to John for his stewardship during this difficult period.

Those who attended the September meet enjoyed the



John Gallagher transferring the
NJ Division Charter to New Superintendent
Glyn Thomas

New Superintendent continued on page 4

Next Division Meet

Saturday November 8, 2025
9 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Brandywine Town Center,
1050 Brandywine Parkway
Wilmington, DE 19803

Model Display

Special Open Flat Car Load

Clinics

How I Scratch built a
Schnabel Car

By Joe Walters

Modeling CNJ Ore Cars
By Glyn Thomas

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Visit us at <https://njdivnmra.org>
and join us on
Groups at <https://groups.io/g/>

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The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Division. Products and publications mentioned in Train Orders in no way constitute an endorsement by the Division.

Train Orders welcomes contributions from the New Jersey Division membership and. Letters, articles, photos and other items may be submitted to the editor. Please include return postage if you would like materials returned.

Division Officials

Superintendent

Glyn Thomas

Assistant Superintendent

Mike Prokop

Division AP Chair

Glyn Thomas, MMR

Clerk/Secretary

Joe Zebrowski

Director-Contest Chair

Jack Menaker

Director of Clinics

Thom Radice Geert Marien

Director-Editor

Fritz Plenefisch

Paymaster/Treasurer

Tom Neukirchen

To contact one of the Directors of the New Jersey Division, fill out the 'Contact Us' link found on the NJD website.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Scam emails have been reported requesting money for a division or charitable purposes. No one from the New Jersey Division will ever request money for gift cards or any other type of funds. These emails are completely fraudulent and should be ignored. If you're not sure, DO NOT REPLY to the email in question. Contact the official Director using "Contact Us" link as listed on the New Jersey Division website

NJD Information Page

The Philadelphia Division is hosting the Mid Eastern Region Convention

October 16-19, 2025

Philly Express website

<https://phillyexpress.org/>

November Joint Meet with the Philadelphia Division

Saturday November 8, 2025

Brandywine Town Center,

4050 Brandywine Parkway

Wilmington, DE 19803

Board Meeting

December 13th, contact

njdiv.super@gmail.com

If you'd like to attend

January Division Meet

Deptford Township Community Center

1219 Delsea Drive (NJ RT 47

Westville, NJ 08093

Tentative date January 17, 2026

March Meet, Switlik Park

Fisher Place, Yardville, NJ 08620

Tentative date March 14, 2026

Joint May Meet with Garden State Division

At Camp Evans/InfoAge Museum

2201 Marconi Rd, Wall Twp NJ07719,

Tentative date May 9, 2026

NJ Division Area Hobby Shops

* AAA Hobbies & Crafts

706 N. Whitehorse Pike,

Magnolia, NJ 08049

(856) 435-7645

www.AAAHobbiesandCrafts.com

* Sattler's Hobby Shop

14 Haddon Ave.

Westmont, NJ 08108

(856) 854-7136

* The Train Room Online Store

www.thetrainroomNJ.com

e-mail thetrainroomnj@msn.com

* Yankee Dabbler - Track 33

101 W. Kings Hwy, Bellmawr, NJ

08031

* Offers discount to NMRA members. Must show Current Membership Card

Membership Information

Any NMRA member who lives within the boundaries of the Division as defined by the NMRA is considered to be a Division member.

NJ Division Annual Activity Fee: \$15.00 (optional and includes 5 meets) or individual meets \$5 at the door.

First time guests, no charge!

National Model Railroad Association P.O. Box 1328

Soddy Daisy TN 37384-1328

www.nmra.org

View From the Cab-The Future of the Division

Glyn Thomas, Superintendent

I hadn't really anticipated making my first attempt at 'View from the Cab' a call to action, but given the low attendance at Forked River, I feel it is necessary.

There can be little doubt that NJ Division is in trouble at present with slowly declining membership and much quicker attrition at divisional activities. To a certain extent, this reflects a general decline in public engagement with 'legacy' hobby and pastime organizations, and the national-level impact can be seen in the column inches of angst poured out in NMRA magazine. All this is despite apparent health in the hobby as a whole – it seems that there has never been a better selection of locomotives and rolling stock on the market that look good and run well, while DCC makes it trivial to get a layout up and running in minutes. How do we tap into this broad interest in the hobby? This will be a theme of my tenure as Superintendent.

Of immediate concern for the Division is we're doing worse than our neighbors in Philadelphia and Garden State. These divisions draw on similar pools of modelers but regularly attract larger attendance at their proportion of their membership. What are they doing that we're not?

I strongly believe the social disruption caused by the COVID pandemic has caused a permanent change in the way that ad-hoc social groups, including hobby organizations, interact. Doing the same things better may

slow the attrition, but it won't reverse it.

As a 'Quick Win', we will start by doing the basics better. I'd like to firm up the full year's schedule of meets as quickly as possible to help members plan their social calendars. We need to be much more organized within our meets, including getting setup (technology!) in advance of members arriving, and better time keeping against the agenda during the meet itself.

In the longer term, I believe the educative mission of the NMRA is fundamental (and, incidentally, is also critical to its not-for-profit status). Beyond this, I think that everything is negotiable. Even without changing the bylaws, there is considerable latitude about how we interpret the '5 meets per year' remit, and we may supplement schedule with different types of activities to broaden the appeal. As I said at the meet, a modern tenet of the lean startup is trying things out and then deciding whether to persevere or pivot – there is no shame in 'failing fast', if we learn from our mistakes.

A final comment – to attract a younger breed of modeler, we need to become much more technologically savvy as an organization. The current 50-something modeler will have grown up with a PC in the house and started using the Internet in the dial-up era. While not Digital Native, they are at least technically competent and are very happy to engage via electronic means, up to and including

social media. We need to move in this direction to embrace them.

If my members want to get to know me better or have ideas about how the Division should be run, I'd be very happy to talk to you either at a meet or one-on-one. I work during the week and don't generally accept unknown phone calls, so please contact me via the division email (njdiv.super@gmail.com) and we can setup a time to talk. I only ask that ideas be realistic given the limited volunteer time and resources available to the Division.



Charles Patrick Long RIP

I was very saddened to hear of the passing of Charlie Long, Clerk for the Philadelphia Division. In addition to his work with the Philadelphia Division, Charlie was active with the East Penn Traction Club and the Abington Model Railroad Club.

I first met Charlie at an NMRA convention where we connected over a shared interest in the Belgian Vicinal (a historical country-wide trolley network). He was very generous in sharing his photo collection that he took while traveling in the final years of its operation. Subsequently, I visited his Philadelphia trolley layout, and we'd always connect at meets and conventions. My condolences to all his friends and family across the region.

New Superintendent continued from page 1

usual mix of camaraderie and a layout “Design for Operations” interactive session facilitated by John Gallagher that elicited interesting discussions. We should continue these discussions on the Divisions email group, Although attendance was low, there was good turnout at the layout visits. These meets at the periphery of the Division are intended to include members who otherwise have long distances to travel and offer opportunities to visit member’s layouts that are off the beaten track, but they need decent attendance to be viable. Please consider traveling outside your immediate locale when these opportunities are offered.

As we celebrate the official start of Fall, we also enter the peak model railroad season freed from the outdoor distractions of Summer. Kick off the season by attending the **“Philly Express” Regional Convention at Valley Forge from October 16th to 19th**. <https://phillyexpress.org/> This will be very local for our division members and our friends at Philadelphia Division have put together a comprehensive offering covering nearly every aspect of the hobby. With prototype tours, operating sessions, layout visits, contests, vendors, white elephant room, and banquet, in addition to the regular clinics, I’m sure everyone will navigate their own path through the event.

If you haven’t participated before, I strongly recommend signing up for some of the layout operating sessions, which offer a much more ‘in depth’ experience with some of the best layouts in the Region. It’s also worth noting that emphasis on ‘make and take’ in the clinics (including Modeling with the Masters), meaning that you can learn some skills and come away with the fruits of your labors. Personally, due to work commitments, I will be presenting/attending for the weekend only. I hope to see you there.

Please also save the date of November 8th, for our joint meet with Philadelphia Division in Wilmington, DE 



Board Members in Attendance at the September Meet
Thom Radice, Geert Marien, Joe Zebrowski, Tom Neukirchen, Glyn Thomas.

Model Contests and Displays

Jack Menaker, Model Display Chairman

The November Meet Display is a Special Open Flat Car Load

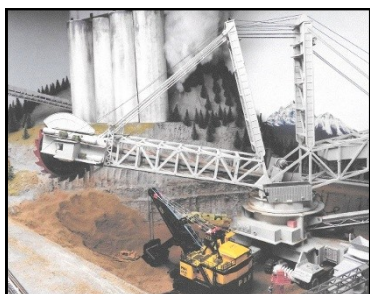
Scheduled Meet	Display Table Topic	Special Notes
November 2025	Special Open Flat Car Load	
January 2026	Picture of something special on your layout	
March 2026	Kit Bash/Scratch Built	Display Only
May 2026	Railroad Related Scene	Built in a Mayonnaise Jar Lid-2" dia x .34"
September 2026		
December 2026		



The September winner was Ralph DeBlasi
with this Diorama

The model that gets the most votes for the topic will get, a Framed Certificate and a Voucher to cover our activity fee. When you come to the meet remember to vote for Best in Show. 🚂

Best of 2024 Model Displays



Rick Spano's N scale Bucket
Wheel Excavator.



Jack Menaker's Piece of
Weathered Rolling Stock



The January Favorite Model
was Herb Gishlick's Observation Car.

Achievement Program – Comments on the AP

Thom Radice

Funny it is, how a comment can be just the impetus to consider thoughtfulness. Many years ago, I embarked on this AP excursion. Many years ago, Dick Genthner and Herb Gishlick came to my place, post a NJ Division meet. At one point we were discussing some aspect of the layout. Dick, in his gentlemanly manner, remarked to Herb about the Achievement Program and that I probably have enough modeling work completed for a few certificates. Herb agreed and asked if I knew about this program, which I did. However, I had zero interest. I had a layout to complete. I knew the AP had something to do with master model railroader status, and perhaps bragging rights of sorts. The latter was a bit of a pejorative point of view, which I expressed in a joking manner. Frankly, I thought such an endeavor sounded a bit pompous and self-aggrandizing. Of course, I kept those thoughts submerged. Once I turned off my judgement about it, I was able to hear Dick and Herb express their genuine appreciation for the modeling, my modeling, and creativity. They were not pushing a door prize, so to speak, or saying something to appeal to the self-serving ego, but to a process that recognizes a love for the hobby. I knew of Dick and Herb from seeing them at division meets and listening to members express their appreciations of them. Dick was our AP

director at this time, I believe, but didn't know it then. These two fellas represented a mature humility and genuine penchant for the common endeavor of model railroading. It was this latter point, their friendly and matter of fact observations that convinced me to apply for the Golden Spike. After that experience and achievement, I never looked back. Dick was very accommodating and Herb quite supportive and encouraging. From here I not only got to meet other members but learned how they enjoyed the hobby as well.

As we frequently read, the beginning of friendships is sparked and on occasion expand into our respective personal lives. When you think about it, relationships are all that we have. Spouses, significant others, families, co-workers, church communities, etc. Not that they are all pleasant all of the time, but some are certainly more enjoyable than others.

The pursuit of AP certificates, which I have come to learn for me, has very little to do with acquiring anything. Some modelers, perhaps many, are focused solely on the accomplishment which is in and of itself an admirable goal. Most likely, however, they also enjoy the natural comradery that ensues. When judges come to your home, inspect your layout and provide their time, they also come with knowledge and points of view I found

enlightening. Multiple eyes offer perspective. These observations translate into information about various techniques, suggestions, and tips on how to improve your modeling. For some people this is daunting. A natural discomfort is having others "critique" items that you have spent hours crafting to the AP requirements. I quickly learned that their intent is not to criticize and make wrong. They are invested in your success. I have come to value the process and their contributions. But also, the wonderful relationships that have evolved over time.

So, when you hear someone comment about the "AP crap", it reveals an uneducated and judgmental position about a process they know from the outside looking in, but not in the endeavor.

Yes, there is the self-imposed dread of paperwork. I found this part has more to do with my perception and mindset than the actual task. Is it challenging, sure. But as one high performer was once quoted, "if it was easy, anyone could do it". The rewards continue. The greatest is the fellowship that flows from the mutually enjoyable hobby of model railroading.



Achievement Program (AP) Update

Glyn Thomas, Division AP Chair

At the September meet, I presented Thom Radice with his certificates for AP Cars and AP Volunteer. It is notable that due to Thom's work of establishing and operating the American Civil War Railway Historical Society (ACWRHS) as an NMRA Special Interest Group, he earned his volunteer hours several times over. Nice work Thom!

I have certificates issued but not distributed for Bill Howard (AP Civil) and Tim Palmer

(AP Dispatcher) Congratulations to both of you.

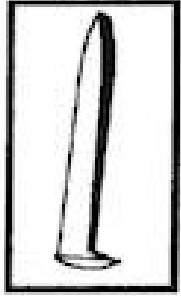
The contest room at the upcoming Philly Express convention is a great way to earn Merit Awards for individual models, even if you don't win an overall category. Any Merit Awards earned will count towards the relevant AP certificate. I personally wouldn't enter models that competed in the same category (e.g. two revenue freight cars), but the categories are quite granular, you could enter a revenue

freight car, passenger car, non-revenue car, and MOW car to get a long way towards AP Cars. The same applies for motive power and structures

Finally we have judging capacity available to assess any AP categories that you think may be ready. If you're not sure of how you stack up, do a Golden Spike to engage the process - you could be pleasantly surprised. 



Division members who received Certificates of Appreciation for their Contributions to the NJ Division Charter from John Gallager. Left to Right: Geert Marien, Joe Weisbrod, John Gallager, Joe Zebrowski, Glyn Thomas, Tom Neukirchen, Thom Racine,



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM JANUARY 2025

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR DIVISION OR REGION AP MANAGER

Member Name: _____ NMRA #: _____ Exp: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ State/Prov.: _____

ZIP/PC: _____ Country: _____ NMRA Region: _____ Division: _____

Date Submitted: _____ E-Mail: _____ Phone: _____

- The Golden Spike Award (GSA) will be awarded to any NMRA member who completes the Qualifications Checklist, obtains the necessary signatures (Division AP Manager or some local NMRA member approved by the Division AP Manager), and if the applicant does not already hold MMR status.
- The GSA will be administered by the Division and Region AP Managers.
- AP requirements and definitions apply for scratch building and super-detailing.
- The Division AP Manager will submit the signed form to the Region AP Manager who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.
- The Region AP Manager will then forward the completed form to the National AP Manager so that an announcement can be made in the NMRA Magazine.

GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- ☐ Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed commercial kits.

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- ☐ Construct a minimum of eight square feet of model railroad or module(s) including scenery in any scale.
- ☐ Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- ☐ Three types of track are required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial track may be used.
- ☐ All installed track must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command or other form of control).
- ☐ Provide any one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Witness: _____ Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Region AP Manager: _____ Region: _____